

ECLECTICISM

ANATOMY OF FORM

Week 11

**Eclecticism in Architecture in the
19th and early 20th Century**

Eclecticism

- Since the Renaissance architects had essentially followed the Vitruvian precept that architecture was an imitation of nature.
- The advent of the Industrial Revolution, which began in England towards the end of the eighteenth century, had a complex and significant impact on that assumption, and almost every other about architecture.
- Before the Industrial Revolution patronage for architects had been confined almost exclusively to the state, the Church and the aristocracy.

George Gilbert Scott,
Midland Grand Hotel,
London, 1865-76



Eclecticism

- Economic and social changes saw a new class of patrons emerge - the bourgeoisie - who were wealthy company owners and industrialists with the capital and inclination to build on a grand scale.
- New ways of organizing and dividing labour and other transformations in society inaugurated new building types: not only the factory and the warehouse, but also the hospital, prison, bank, municipal library, town hall and railway station.

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Eclecticism

- New materials and advances in engineering, notably in the use of iron and plate glass, presented new structural opportunities for architects but also problems in reconciling these materials to existing architectural languages.
- It was no surprise that it was engineers rather than architects who were the first to exploit the possibilities of iron and, later, steel: a development that marked a decisive break between the two disciplines.

Stylistic Relativism

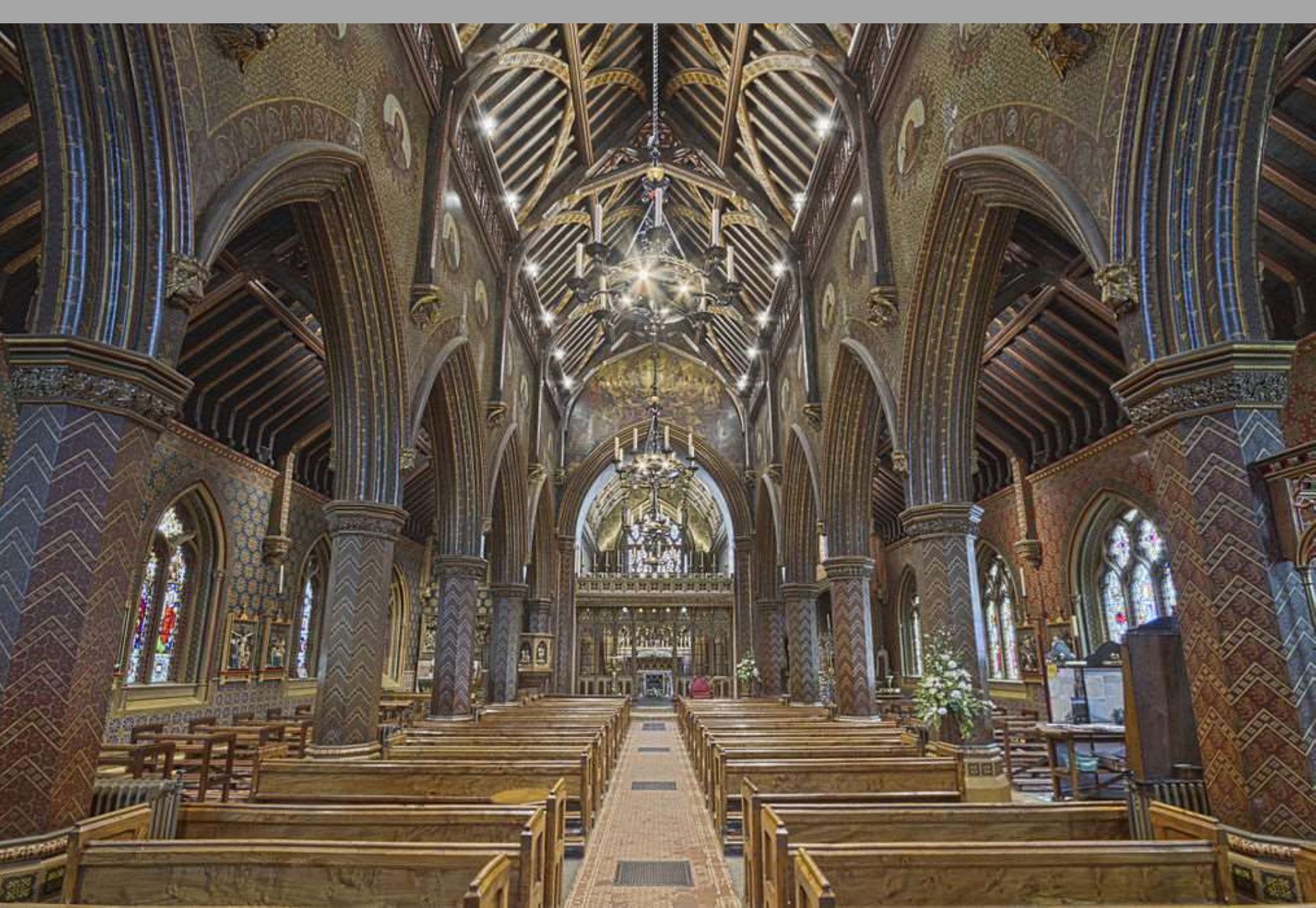
- The upheavals in terms of patronage, new building types and new materials inaugurated by the Industrial Revolution irrevocably eroded the dominance of Renaissance principles and, ultimately, those of classical antiquity in governing architectural theory and practice.
- Without this single overarching authority stylistic relativism ensued, and styles outside the classical canon - some even beyond the Western tradition – assumed currency and legitimacy.
- Eclecticism, therefore, describes an architectural culture in which the Gothic Revival could co-exist with Beaux-Arts academic classicism, and where imperialist Orientalism would lead to the proliferation of styles as diverse as Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, Moorish and Mayan.

Ruskin and Morris

- Despite the comparative stylistic freedom granted to architects, a prevalent and significant school of thought, led by the Englishmen John Ruskin (1819-1900) and later William Morris (1834-96), was suspicious of the effect of the new social, economic and material conditions of modernity on traditional craftsmanship.
- Ruskin reacted strongly to the encroachments of mechanization and standardization in architectural production.
- His essay *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) codified his theory of architecture as the direct expression of its craftsman, through whose honest workmanship and fidelity to the qualities of materials a transcendent beauty might be attained.

Ruskin and Morris

- Ruskin's predisposition was to the Gothic and he followed many of the earlier ideas of the Gothic Revivalist *AWN* Pugin (1812-52), who had sought, through architecture, a return to the aesthetic and moral realities of the Middle Ages.
- Ruskin's advocacy of traditional aesthetic values and craftsmanship was largely taken up by William Morris, whose Arts and Crafts movement aimed at integrating aesthetic and social reform.



A.W.N. Pugin, 51. Giles Catholic Church,
Cheadle, Cheshire, 1841-6

Structural Rationalism

- While Pugin, Ruskin and Morris were, despite their differences, essentially anti-modern in their reaction to the social, aesthetic and religious upheavals that modernity had initiated, other thinkers, notably the French architect Eugene - Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-79), saw more obvious potential in modern materials.
- Although he also resorted to the Gothic, his reasons for doing so were considerably different, as he regarded medieval Gothic architecture as the uniquely rational expression of the structural possibilities of stone and brick.

Structural Rationalism

- Viollet-le-Duc argued that this same rational approach should be applied when dealing with iron and plate glass, the materials of the new industrial age.
- Putting his theory into practice proved rather more difficult, and Viollet-le-Duc is better remembered for his creative restoration of numerous medieval structures across France (in distinct contrast to the non-interventionist approach advocated by Ruskin).

Gothic Revival

- Since the time of the Renaissance, Gothic architecture had been broadly perceived as ugly, irrational, unsound - the dangerous 'Other' of the purity of classicism.
- Giorgio Vasari's mid sixteenth-century argument that the barbarian hordes of the 'Goths ' and 'Visigoths' had not only destroyed Roman architecture in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, but civilization itself, had lasting currency

Gothic Revival

- By the 1830s the arguments of the High Anglican Oxford Movement for a return to lost medieval religious traditions had attained prominence, a tendency that eventually morphed into Anglo-Catholicism.
- Architecturally this was best exemplified in the work of the prolific architect and theorist A.W.N. Pugin (who himself became a Catholic in 1834). Pugin argued that an authentically medieval Gothic style of architecture would facilitate a return to a morally virtuous medieval faith and society.

Natural Gothic



Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward,
Natural History Museum, Oxford, 1854-8

Natural Gothic

The skeletal systems of animals and plants were often examined for inspiration for 'natural' Gothic structures, notably by Viollet-le-Duc. The slender Gothicized iron forms of the roof of Oxford's Natural History Museum echo the skeletons exhibited beneath, while references to the science of geology were made through the use of different stones throughout the museum building.

Gothic Revival

- As evidence for this, his book *Contrasts* (1836) juxtaposed fifteenth century buildings with contemporary ones; the stark differences between the benign charity provided by a medieval monastery and the harsh conditions of a nineteenth-century workhouse were, for Pugin, obvious in their implications.
- Although largely disparaging of Pugin, John Ruskin appeared to owe many of his ideas to Pugin's example.
- *The Stones of Venice* (1853) was arguably Ruskin's most coherent statement of his architectural theory expanding his earlier *Seven Lamps of Architecture*.



G.E.Street, Royal Courts of Justice, London,
1868-82

Gothic Revival

- Ruskin rejected the classical tradition, seeing it as pagan in derivation and stupefied in revival, all the while making slaves of its workmen. The Gothic, he argued, was contrastingly natural and fluid, and allowed craftsmen opportunity for individual expression.
- For Ruskin the Gothic was synonymous with **authentic**, pre-industrial modes of labour and an honest relationship sustained between materials, craftsmen and, ultimately, God.



William Butterfield, All
Saints, Margaret Street,
London, 1850-59

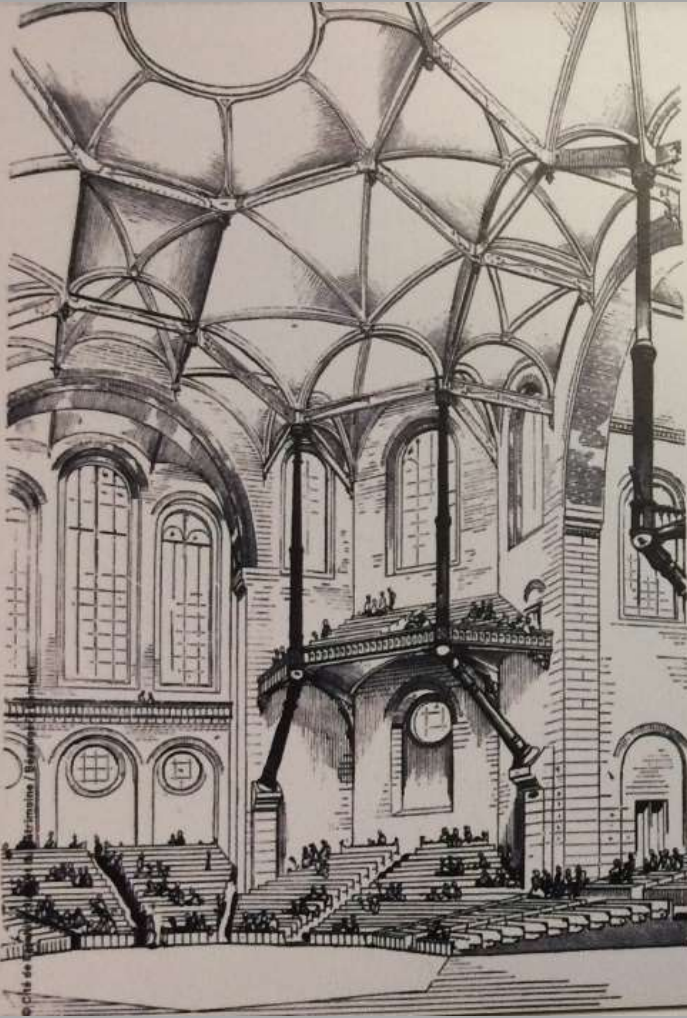


William Butterfield, All
Saints, Margaret Street,
London, 1850-59

Gothic Revival

- The third important theorist of the Gothic Revival was Viollet-le-Duc, whose work took a quite different direction to those of the more sentimentally inclined revivals.
- In his *Entretiens sur l'architecture* (1863-72; translated as *Discourses on Architecture*, 1877-81), he argued that architecture must be based on structural principles and fidelity to the intrinsic properties of materials, be they traditional or modern.

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc 1814-79



«Salle voûtée, fer et maçonnerie» (non réalisée)

→ 1864

Publiée dans le xii^e des *Entretiens sur l'architecture*, 1863-1872
Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), architecte

Des traités d'anatomie comparée, nouvelle science introduite au début du xix^e siècle par Georges Cuvier, Viollet-le-Duc tire une méthode d'analyse et de conception architecturale. Cette salle de concert se lit comme un organisme vivant où «l'ensemble forme un tout harmonique dont les parties sont indivisibles». À l'image du squelette animal, chaque élément remplit une fonction distincte et s'assemble en un tout unique. L'ossature métallique qui soutient une mince voûte est volontairement mise en exergue. Ce projet résume la doctrine rationaliste de l'architecte.

French architect and theorist, famous for his interpretive “restorations” of medieval buildings. See Carcassonne

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc

Gothic revival architect



Salle voûtée, fer et maçonnerie
Vaulted room of iron and masonry

Gothic Revival

- Although he maintained that form was of secondary consideration, it was in the Gothic that he saw these principles at work most clearly.
- Although Viollet-le-Duc's theories were not always borne out successfully in his architecture, his **structural rationalism** and **truth to materials** proved influential on **Modernist** thinking.

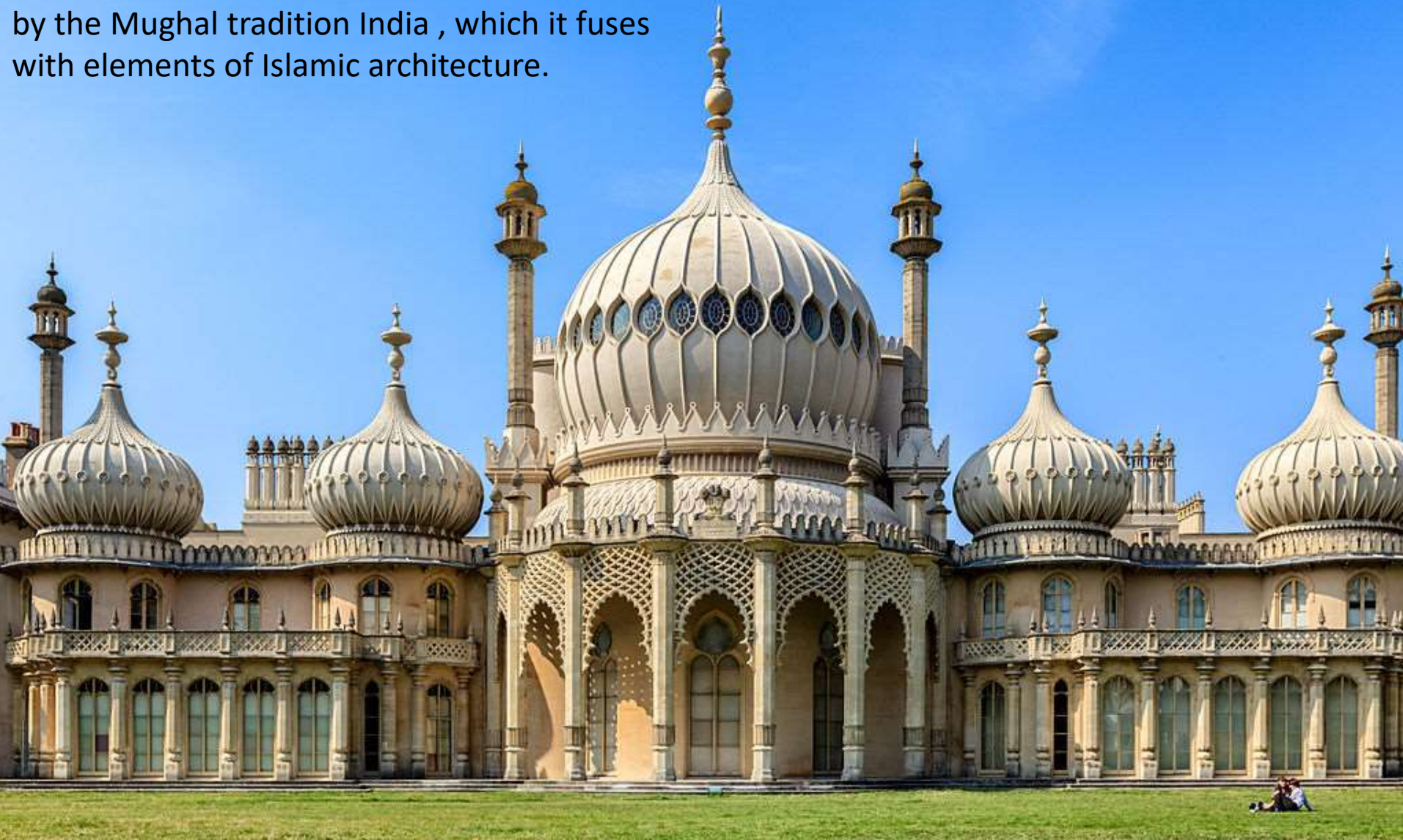
Orientalism

- The interactions between East and West brought on by colonialist expansion have had a long and wide ranging impact on architecture.
- Until the emergence of Modernism, and in some cases after, the relationship between East and West, architectural or otherwise, was governed by one overriding framework: Orientalism.

Orientalism

- Centuries of imperialist expansion had seen such cultures submit through military force to being 'Orientalized' by the West.
- While Western cultures viewed themselves as paragons of civilization, learning and progress, the 'Orient ' was associated with barbarity, the supposed ignorance of its people, and cultural and intellectual stasis.

John Nash's Royal Pavilion is heavily influenced by the Mughal tradition India , which it fuses with elements of Islamic architecture.



John Nash, Royal Pavilion, Brighton, 1787-1823

Orientalism

- By defining Western culture by what it was not, it was through Orientalism, Said argued, that the idea of 'the West' came into existence as a coherent entity.
- Cultural (including architectural) figurations of Orientalism began almost as soon as the first encounters between different cultures.
- The 'new worlds' were quickly exploited for their riches; international commercial organizations such as the British and Dutch East India Companies forged sophisticated trade routes, not just for commodities such as tea and spices, but for more valuable cultural goods such as porcelain.



Sir William Chambers, Pagoda,
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew,
London, 1761

Beaux-Art

- The Beaux-Arts style takes its name from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where many of the main exponents of the style studied.
- Others were exposed to its precepts at other architecture schools, especially those in the United States that followed its methods and philosophy.
- We will look at this in context of the Chicago School in later lectures.

Beaux-Art



Charles Garnier, Palais Garnier, Paris, 1861-74

Arts and Crafts

- The Arts and Crafts movement, led both spiritually and intellectually by William Morris, was an aesthetic and idealistic reaction to the forces and conditions of modernity.
- Influenced by Ruskin, Morris was committed to the reintegration of high aesthetics and everyday craftsmanship.
- A committed socialist with strong views on the dehumanizing effects of the division of labour, Morris argued that if the artist and architect became craftsmen once more, the tyranny of the machine could be overthrown.



Traditional building crafts were combined with an eclectic range of architectural styles; Morris's own Red House, Kent, designed by Philip Webb (1831-1915) in 1859, for example, combined medieval influences with Queen Anne Style round-headed windows.

Arts and Crafts

- Despite his opposition to modernity (also reflected in his instrumental role in founding the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings SPAB in 1877), he found commercial, as well as artistic, success with his firm Morris & Co. making furniture, fabrics, carpets and wallpapers inspired by late medieval precedents.
- Morris revived numerous traditional skills, although he took care not to slavishly imitate the past but rather to revive its methods and remain true to its principles in an era of great change.



Begun in 1875, Bedford Park in west London has a strong claim to be the first Garden Suburb. Its pioneering owner, Jonathan Carr, commissioned the leading architect Richard Norman Shaw to produce a number of house designs for the new development. Shaw's designs, largely in the Queen Anne Style, created streets that, although entirely new, possessed a natural, Picturesque variety - a recurring feature of Arts and Crafts design.

The HOSTELRY and

"THE STORES".

Bedford Park.

CHISWICK.

R. Norman Shaw R.A.
ARCHITECT

A Private House

Scale of feet

Part of first floor.

Ground Plan of Inn.

BATH ROAD



Archiseek.com

"The STORES"

Private House

7th HOSTELRY

Richard Norman Shaw, Bedford Park Garden
Suburb, London, 1875-86



Arts and Crafts

- Architecturally the Arts and Crafts movement was characterized by a romantic historicism that harked back to a traditional rural lifestyle before the advent of modernity and the squalor of industrial cities.

Standen, East Grinstead



Philip Webb, Architect (1831-1915) 1891 and 1894

Art Nouveau

- Emerging at the end of the nineteenth century and prevalent until the outbreak of World War I in 1914
- Art Nouveau was arguably the first avant-garde architectural style. Rejecting historicism, if not tradition itself, Art Nouveau, or Jugendstil as it was known in Germany, encompassed all areas of design and the decorative arts.



**Hector Guimard,
Porte Dauphine
Metro
Station, Paris, 1900**

Art Nouveau

- The sensation of the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, the style quickly became an international phenomenon, perhaps due in part to its dissemination in print and graphic design.
- In many ways Art Nouveau provided a connection between the inherent subjectivity of craft and the objectivity of modern mechanized production.



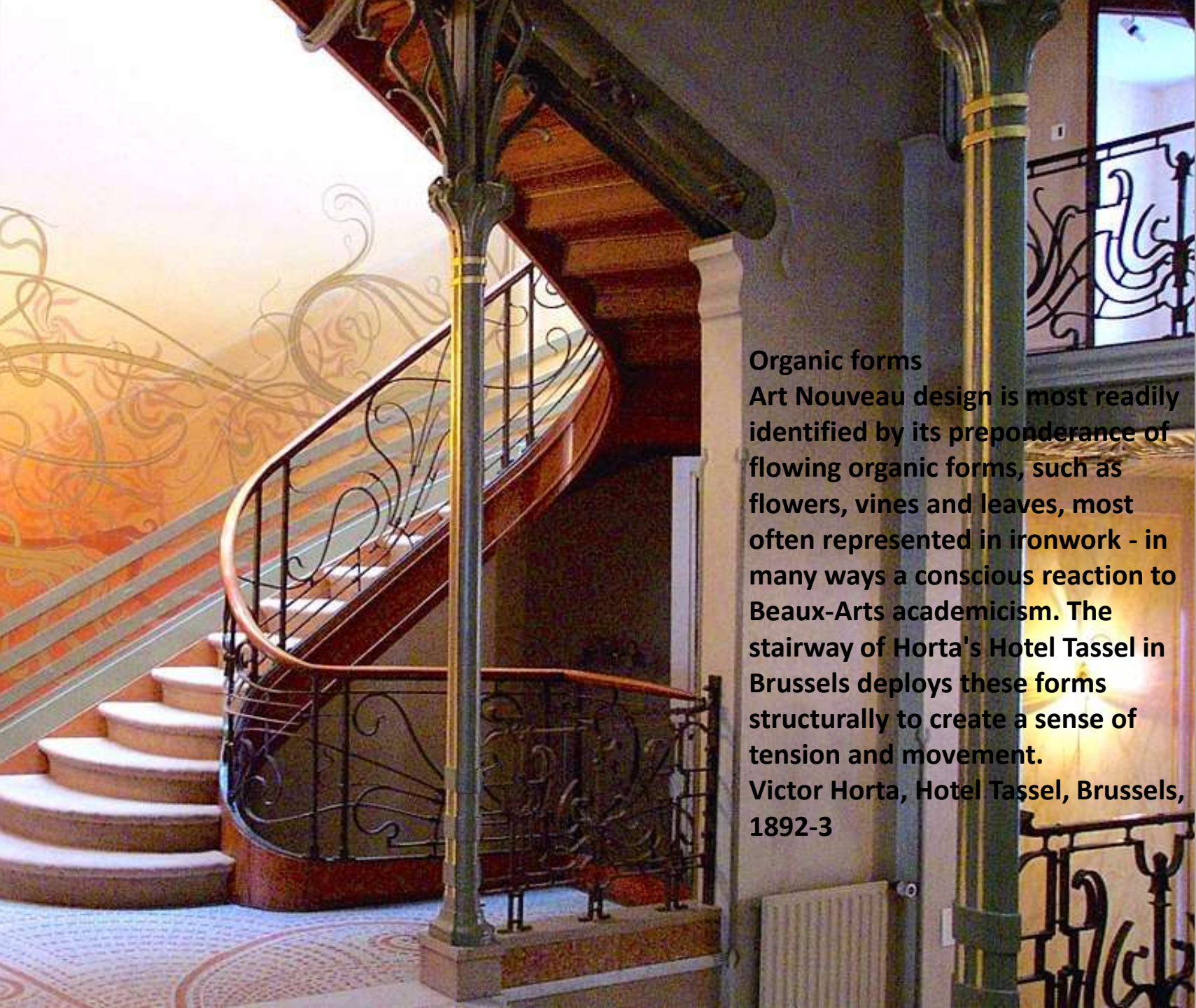
The Vienna **Secession Building**, was built in 1898 by Joseph Maria Olbrich, in the Jugendstil style as a showcase for the Secession movement's artists .

Art Nouveau

- The Vienna Secession, the group of artists and architects formed in 1897 had resigned in protest from the conservative Vienna Kunstlerhaus.
- Otto Wagner's *Moderne Architektur* (1895) was an important text for the Secession; it argued in favour of an architecture that, in keeping with the philosophy of Art Nouveau, rejected historicism, but that should also represent modernity using appropriate materials and techniques.
- Secessionist buildings, such as Wagner's Post Office Savings Bank (1894-1902), tended to be plain, eschewing much of the ornament associated with Art Nouveau. This attempt to forge a modern culture, free from the contingencies of ornament, was taken to its logical conclusion by Adolf Loos in his famous essay, 'Ornament and Crime' (1908).



Victor Horta, Hotel Tassel, Brussels, 1892-3



Organic forms

Art Nouveau design is most readily identified by its preponderance of flowing organic forms, such as flowers, vines and leaves, most often represented in ironwork - in many ways a conscious reaction to Beaux-Arts academicism. The stairway of Horta's Hotel Tassel in Brussels deploys these forms structurally to create a sense of tension and movement.

Victor Horta, Hotel Tassel, Brussels, 1892-3



By the 1900s many architects previously aligned with Art Nouveau were moving beyond its formal language. One of the most significant works exhibiting this tendency was Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art (1897-1909).



Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art (1897-1909).

Josef Hoffman, Palais Stoclet, Brussels,
1905-11

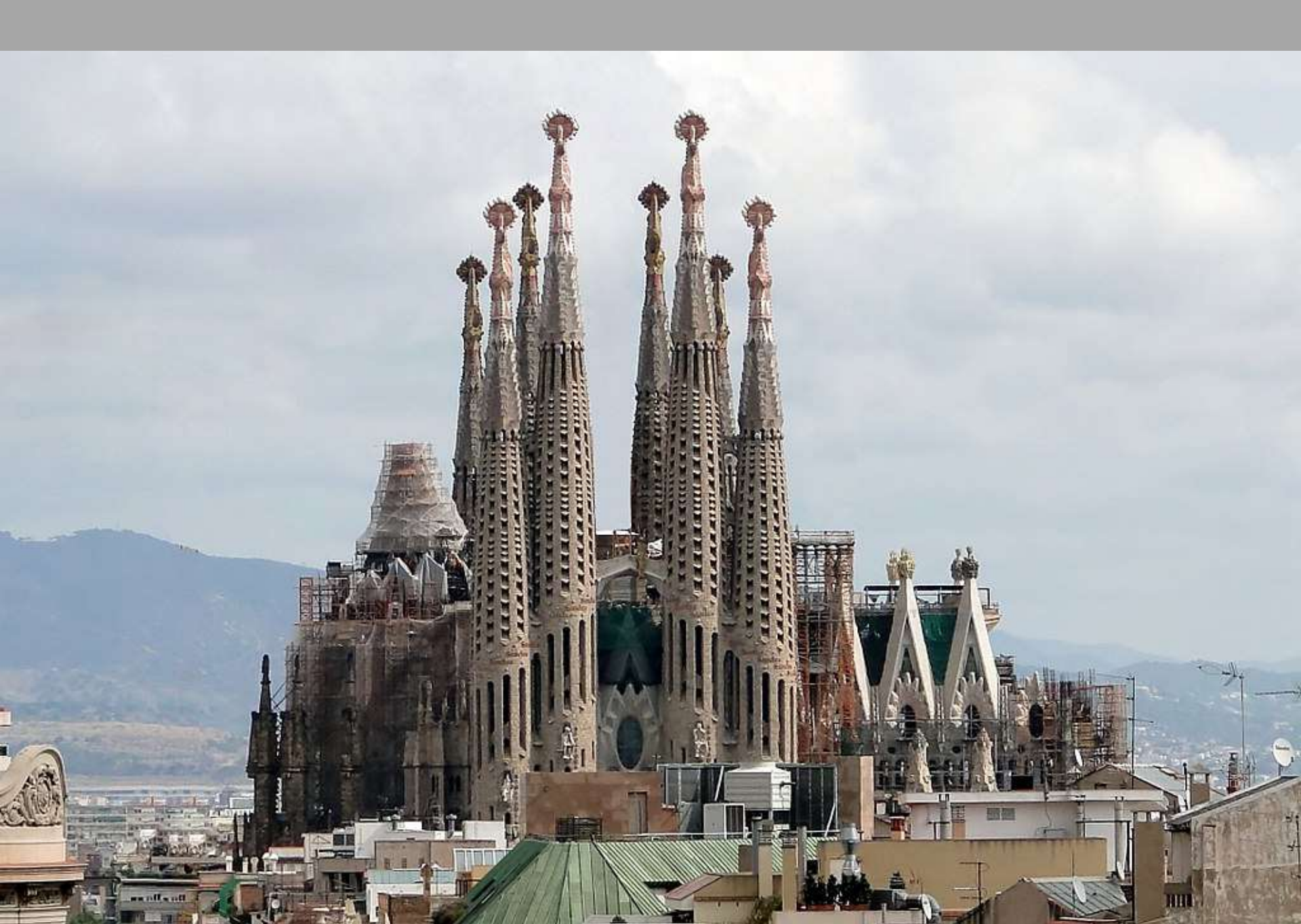


Josef Hoffman's Palais Stoclet in Brussels, designed for the industrialist and art collector Adolphe Stoclet , largely rejected ornament, but through decoration and architectural form it was able to sustain many different ideas and interpretations.



Each level of Gaudi's masterwork, the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, increases in fantasy, moving towards and then beyond Art Nouveau. Drawing from North African Berber architecture as well as Gothic and organic forms, Gaudi created a dynamic tension between the rationalism of Barcelona's grid and his almost metaphysical architecture that alludes to the work of the Surrealists, notably his fellow Catalan Salvador Dali.

Antoni Gaudi, Expiatory Church of the Holy Family (Sagrada Familia), Barcelona, Spain, begun 1884



Art Deco

- Art Deco burst onto the world stage at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925.
- The underlying aim of the exhibition, which gave Art Deco its name, was to re-establish Paris as the leading centre of design, fashion and high-end consumer products.

Art Deco

- The exhibition was also notable for its Modernist displays.
- Le Corbusier (1887-1966) exhibited his infamous Plan Voisin inside his Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau, while the Constructivist Soviet pavilion by Konstantin Melnikov (1890-1974) showcased the bold artistic experiments taking place in post-Revolutionary Russia.

Wallis Gilbert and Partners, Hoover Factory,
Perivale London, 1935



Art Deco

- In contrast to these pioneering Modernist experiments, Art Deco, as it both appeared in the exhibition and developed over the next decade, was almost entirely devoid of intellectual content or of a social or a moral agenda.
- It was style in its purest sense, and reactionary in its undiscerning embrace of eclectic ornament, colour, rich materials and lustrous surfaces.
- If anything, Art Deco represented a vague optimism in the possibilities of modernity, not as a break from the past (as did Modernism), but in a way that democratized - or rather - 'consumerized' luxury.

Chrysler Building, New York



William Van Alen, Chrysler Building,
New York City, 1928-30

William Van Alen, Chrysler Building,
New York City, 1928-30



Art Deco

- Architecture notably in new theatres and cinemas was just one manifestation of Art Deco, which was also used for the design of everything from ocean liners and cars through to telephones and radios.
- Art Deco epitomized the excitement and glamour of the Jazz Age and the fashionable, party-going 'Bright Young Things', satirized by the English writer Evelyn Waugh in his novel *Vile Bodies* (1930).

**Edward Durrell Stone, Radio City Music Hall,
Rockerfeller Centre, New York, 1932**

